

VIRTUES OF THE PROPHET'S MOSQUE IN MADINA

1) The Foundation of the Prophet's Mosque was Laid on Piety

Prophet's mosque is one of those mosques whose foundation was laid on piety. This is described in the Qur'an and Hadith. Allah Ta'ala states in al-Tawbah 108:

'Verily, the mosque whose foundation was laid from the first day on piety is more worthy that you stand therein (to pray). In it are men who love to clean and to purify themselves. And Allah loves those who make themselves clean and pure.'

It is narrated by Abu Sa'eed al-Khudriy [Radhiallaahu anhu] that Prophet Muhammad [Sallallahu Alayhi Wasallam] said, 'The above verse is describing the Prophet's mosque.' (Muslim 15:1398)

Further explanation of the above verse and some other Hadith support the idea that both, the Prophet's mosque and the Quba mosque, have their foundations laid on piety. The following scholars have discussed this topic in more detail: Hafiz ibn Hajar al-Asqalaani (Fath al-Baari vol.6 pg.245), Samhoudi (Wifa-ul-Wifa vol.2 pg.415) and ibn al-Jawzi (Zaad al-Maseer vol.3 pg.501)

2) Virtues of Teaching / Learning Activities in the Prophet's Mosque

Seeking beneficial knowledge is a form of worship and it brings a person closer to Allah Ta'ala. Allah Ta'ala states in Faatir 28: 'It is only those who have knowledge among his slaves that fear Allah. Verily, Allah is All-Mighty, Oft-Forgiving'.

When the teaching/learning activity is conducted in the prophet's mosque, it becomes a superior form of worship.

Abu Hurayra [Radhiallaahu anhu] narrates that Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] said, 'Whoever will come to my mosque with the only intention to conduct teaching/learning activities and to promote beneficial knowledge will have his reward equivalent to the person who fights in the path of Allah. A person who has some other purpose in his mind is like an individual who is looking towards other's wealth.' (Sunan ibn Majah227; Musnad Ahmad 23:270)

Abu Umamah al-Bahili [Radhiallaahu anhu] narrated that Prophet [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] said, 'Whoever visits my mosque in the morning with the sole purpose of conducting teaching/learning activities will have a reward equivalent to performing a Hajj.' (al-Mu'jam al-Kabir Tabrani vol.8 pg.111, 7473)

3) Virtues of Performing Salaat (congregational prayers) in the Prophet's Mosque

According to many narrations, the reward for offering one Salaat in the Prophet's mosque is equivalent to one thousand Salaats. In other words, the reward for one Salaat in the Prophet's mosque is greater than performing Salaats in another mosque for a period of six months.

Abu Umar [RadhiAllahu anhu] narrated that Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] said, 'One Salaat offered in my mosque is superior to one thousand Salaats offered in other mosques except Masjid al-Haraam (Makkah al-Mukarramah.)' (Bukhari 20:1190; Muslim 15:1395)

The scholars have discussed this Hadith in great detail. It must be, however, kept in mind that this Hadith is not describing the number of Salaats as such. It is rather pointing out the amount of reward. In other words the amount of reward for one Salaat in the Prophet's mosque will be greater than one thousand Salaats performed elsewhere except in Masjid al-Haram.

Furthermore, if a previously missed Salaat is offered in the Prophet's mosque, it will be considered only as one Salaat and not one thousand Salaats.

4) Virtues of Salaat in the Extentions of the Prophet's Mosque

All scholars agree that the Salaat performed in the extensions of the Prophet's Mosque has the same merit as the Salaat offered inside the Prophet's Mosque existing at the time of Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam].

Zainud-Din Rajab said that the merit of the Salaat in an extension is the same as in the original mosque. Hence, the virtues and merits of offering Salaat in the extensions of Masjid al-Haraam and the Prophet's Mosque will be the same as in the respective original mosques. For more discussion, see the following references: Wifa al-Wifaa (vol.1 pg.357), Fataawa ibn Taymiyah (vol.2 pg.146) and al-Majmoo of Imaam al-Nawawiy (vol.8 pg.277)

5) Virtues of Salaat Offered in the Adjoining Areas of the Prophet's Mosque

There are very large number of people who offer Salaat during Salaatul Jumu'ah (congregational prayer of Jumu'ah), during the month of holy Ramadhaan, during the Hajj period and at the time of both Eids. They cannot be accommodated in the Prophet's mosque. They have to offer Salaat in the adjoining open spaces around the mosque, in near by markets and even in some neighbouring streets. Do the

outside worshippers deserve the same reward as the one who offers Salaat inside the prophet's mosque?

The opinion of a few scholars is that the insiders as well as outsiders do receive the reward of congregational Salaat. However, an outsider does not receive same reward as the one who offers Salaat inside the covered Prophet's mosque. Other scholars hold their opinion that the outsider will be one like offering Salaat inside the Prophet's mosque since the rows are continuous and joining with each other.

Famous scholar, al-Shinqity, said that the additional credit for the Salaat offered in the Prophet's mosque is due to the Grand Mercy of Allah Ta'al and a gift of Allah. How can a person standing inside the mosque and the others standing outside the mosque with their shoulders joining with each other have different amount of credit? Both deserve the same reward. (Tafseer Adwa-ul-biyan vol.8 pg.466)

It will be beneficial to mention here that during the last extension of the Mosque by the Saudi government, special attention was paid to the arrangement and continuity of rows for Salaat. Furthermore, in the outside open spaces, a relatively cool floor of white marble is laid down towards the north, east and western sides of the covered mosque indicating that those open spaces are part of the Prophet's Mosque. Hence, whoever offers Salaat in the open spaces will earn the same credit as the one praying inside the mosque as long as their shoulders are joining with each other in the rows.

I must remind and warn that the Salaat offered in a row formed in front of the Imaam is totally invalid. Therefore, the persons offering Salaat in the eastern and western open spaces should make sure that their rows are not in front of the Imaam. To facilitate this, white marble floor is laid down in part of these open spaces indicating that the rows formed in the areas will be behind the Imaam. Black granite stone is laid down in the rest of the open spaces on the eastern and western sides indicating that the rows formed in these areas will make the Salaat invalid. The administration also puts up display boards with warnings written in many languages for discouraging the worshippers to form any row in front of the Imaam. Great care must be taken in this respect and we must remind each other about it very politely.

6) Is it better to offer Voluntary Salaat at home or in the Prophet's Mosque?

Offering an obligatory Salaat in the Prophet's mosque is definitely superior to the one offered in other places except Masjid al-Haram (Makkah Mukarramah). References from Bukhari and Muslim have been already given in support of this. For the voluntary Salaat, scholars hold different opinions. Some scholars say that this superiority applies both to obligatory and voluntary Salaats. Other scholars

hold the opinion that offering voluntary Salaat at home is superior. They support it by a saying of Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam]. Abdullah ibn Sa'ad [Radhiallaahu anhu] said to the Prophet [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam], 'Should I offer voluntary Salaat at home or in the mosque?' Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] said, 'Although my house is very close to the mosque, yet I offer only obligatory Salaat in the mosque and voluntary Salaats are offered at my home.'

Furthermore, Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] preferred to offer Tahajjud and Sunnah for Salaatul Fajr at home. Hence, offering voluntary Salaat at home is superior.

7) Is it better for a lady to offer Salaat at home or in the Prophet's Mosque?

A review of the sayings of Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] shows that it is mandatory for males to pray in a congregation in a mosque while it is better for the women to offer Salaat in their homes. Since we are discussing the superiority of Salaat offered in the Prophet's mosque, it is very appropriate to mention here what is better for the women. It is best illustrated by a Hadith narrated by Umm Hameed [Radhiallaahu anha]. She said to Prophet [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam], 'O dear Prophet, I enjoy very much praying when you are leading the Salaat.' Rasulullah [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] said, 'I understand that you enjoy praying more when I am leading the Salaat. It is, however, better for you to offer Salaat in your private room than even in your house. It is better for you to pray inside your house than in the courtyard of your house. It is better to offer Salaat in your house than offering it in the neighbourhood Masjid. It is better for you to pray in the neighbourhood Masjid than my Masjid.'

After this, Umm Hameed always prayed in the innermost room of her house and adhered to this practice for rest of her life. (Musnad Ahmad vol.6 pg.371; Saheeh ibn Khuzayma 1689)

This Hadith very clearly instructs us that it is better for women to pray in their homes than in Prophet's mosque. Similarly, it is better for women to pray in their homes than in their neighbourhood mosques.

8) Important etiquettes for women in order to visit a mosque

As mentioned earlier, it is better for a woman to offer Salaat at home. It is, however, permissible to offer Salaat in a mosque if the following conditions are fulfilled:

a) Ask permission from the husband

Ibn Umar [Radhiallaahu anhu] narrated that Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu alayhi Wasallam] said, ‘Don’t prevent your women to visit a mosque if they ask you for your permission.’ (Muslim 4:442)

Similarly, Salaam ibn Abdullah [Radhiallaahu anhu] narrated that Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] said, ‘When your wife asks for permission to visit a mosque, do not refuse her.’ (Bukhari 10:873)

Ibn Umar [Radhiallaahu anhu] also narrated that Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] said, ‘Don’t prevent your women to visit a mosque although their homes are better for them.’ (Sunan Abu Dawud 2:267)

b) Don’t Put on Perfume and Make-up

Zaynab, wife of Abdullah, narrated that Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] said, ‘Don’t put on perfume when you visit a mosque.’ (Muslim 4:443)

It is therefore, not permissible for a woman to visit a mosque when she has put on perfume. The scholars say that anything which draws attention of men to women is not allowed. For example, the outer dress of women should not be showy to make her conspicuous. She should not wear ornaments which produce sound. She should try her best not to mix with men and follow a route which eliminates interaction with other sex.

A conscientious Muslim woman should ponder over what Aaisha [Radhiallaahu anha] said, ‘If Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] had seen our time, he would have totally prevented women to visit mosques just like women of children of Israelites were prevented.’ (Muslim 4:442-443; Bukhari 10:869-873; Abu Dawud 2:867)

Note that Aaisha [Radhiallaahu anha] said about that period of human history which was considered the Golden-period of Islam.

At present time, the European culture has totally destroyed the Muslim community. How much advisable it is for a Muslim woman to go out of her home?

As a summary, it is better for a woman to offer Salaat at home than joining a congregational Salaat in a mosque. However, she is allowed to go to a mosque if she fulfills the conditions described above. We noted that proper dress and other conditions are necessary for offering Salaat by a woman in a mosque. Hence, it is

even more important for a Muslim woman to observe proper dress and fulfil above conditions when she wants to go out for shopping, education, visitation or a job.

9) Offering Forty Salaats in the Prophet's Mosque

Offering forty Salaats in the Prophet's Mosque is not an obligatory part of Hajj or Umrah. By not offering forty Salaats in the Prophet's Mosque will not make the Hajj or Umrah invalid or incomplete.

When people come for Hajj or Umrah, then also try their best to visit the Prophet's Mosque. They try to offer forty Salaats in the Prophet's mosque during this visit because of its mention in some Hadith as explained below. Again, these forty Salaats are not part of visitation to the Prophet's mosque.

Ibn Taymiyah said that visitation to Prophet's mosque consists of offering two Rakaat tahiyyatul Masjid, salutation to Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] and then to Abu Bakr [Radhiallaahu anhu] and then to Umar [Radhiallaahu anhu], and making a supplication for the Muslims. (Fataawa ibn Taymiyah vol.26 pg.136)

Anas [Radhiallaahu anhu] narrated that Prophet Muhammad [Sallallaahu Alayhi Wasallam] said, 'Whosoever will offer forty Salaats in my mosque will be saved from punishment and hypocrisy.' Many reputed scholars consider it a good Hadith. A recent scholar, al-Albaani, however, called it a weak Hadith because of Nabeet, a transmitter of this Hadith.

Qadhi (Justice of Islamic Court) of Madinah al-Munawwarah and a teacher in the Prophet's Mosque, Atiyyah Muhammad Salim, has rejected albaani's opinion. He said, 'Habban, Mundhiri, Bayhaqi and ibn Hajar consider Nabeet a trustworthy person and they did not raise any objection about him. We have no right to question his trustworthiness when the above esteemed scholars accept him.' He added, 'Even if we take it as a weak Hadith, it does not involve Halaal or Haraam (permitted or forbidden) and it in no way effects our belief. This Hadith is only describing the virtues of our actions. We can even accept a weak Hadith when it pertains to virtues of our deeds or actions. The scholars of Hadith do not act very rigidly in such matters.' (Tafseer Adhwa-ul-Biyan vol.8 pg.873)

A similar Hadith is in Tirmidhi which describes the merit of offering forty Salaats not only in Prophet's Mosque but also in any mosque. AlBaani has mentioned it as a good Hadith in his book. (Silsilah al-ahaadith al-saheeha vol.4 pg.628-631)

What is the wisdom in offering forty Salaats in Prophet's mosque or in any other mosque? Why should we be there at first Takbeer, of each Salaat? Atiyya

Muhammad Salim, writes, 'Allah Ta'ala knows the best answer to the question. However, a person who is present at first Takbeer of each Salaat for eight days will have the importance of his presence in the mosque on his mind all the time. He will also become used to the daily congregational Salaat. When he goes back to his homeland after visiting the Prophet's mosque, he will take with him a good habit of attending congregational salaat and will develop a taste for it. Same benefit will be derived by offering forty Salaats in any other mosque. That is why Allah has promised him salvation from punishment and safety against hypocrisy.' (Sunan al-Tirmidhi vol.4 pg.628; Tafseer Adhwa-ul-biyan vol.8 pg.574)

I may add that forty Salaats in the prophet's Mosque are equivalent to forty thousand Salaats. Furthermore, a Salaat offered in congregation is rewarded by Allah twenty five times more. Hence, these forty Salaats will be equivalent to salaat offered in five hundred years. Obviously, the equivalence is in reward and not in number.

Hence, the purpose of this Hadith is to motivate people for congregational salaat. It will be very unfortunate for a person to miss congregational salaat in his homeland after his visitation to the prophet's Mosque.